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SUBJECT: U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL EXPERTS VISIT AUSTRIA

**¶11.** (U) To promote U.S.-Austria environmental cooperation, the Foreign Ministry sponsored an intensive week-long program from Aug. 7-14 for a group of 10 American environmental experts. The group included representatives from federal, state, and local governments; Congress; universities; business and business groups; and environmental NGOs. The program included meetings with government and political representatives, but was largely focused on showing off Austrian environmental technology.

**¶12.** (U) At dinner with Embassy representatives October 9, reactions from the group to the first days of the program varied considerably. A U.S. Chamber of Commerce VP was unimpressed with Austrian technology and very concerned about the focus on "cap and trade" models for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. On the other hand, a NYC official thought her city could learn much from what Vienna is doing. The Staff Director for the House Subcommittee on Water Resources/Environment also thought the U.S. could learn from Austria.

**¶13.** (U) Despite their differing views, the participants were all eager to follow-up the visit in practical ways. A California professor hoped to organize a California/U.S.-Austria conference in 2008 on environmental studies in Austria. An expert from the American Council on Renewable Energy saw opportunities for selling U.S. renewable fuels in Austria; Embassy officials plan to follow-up and support this idea. Even the Chamber of Commerce participant thought it would be useful to arrange a visit to Austria by a small group of experts who could engage in public diplomacy on the U.S. business community's environmental activities.

McCaw